SOME REMARKS ON THE PROBLEM OF THE DATE OF VĀCASPATIMIŚRA[1]

BY

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Since P. Hacker wrote his suggestive article "Jayantabhaṭṭa and Vācaspatimiśra, ihre Zeit und ihre Bedeutung für die Chronologie des Vedānta"[2], the problem of fixing the date of Vācaspati has been discussed especially by K. Cammann ["Das System des Advaita nach der Lehre Prakāśātmans" (Wiesbaden 1965), pp. 7 f.] and by S. A. Srinivasan ["Vācaspatimiśra's Tattvakaumudī" (Hamburg 1967), pp. 54 ff.]. The results of Srinivasan's studies might be briefly summarised thus : all the extrinsic criteria for fixing the date of Vācaspati, especially the Nyāyasūcīnibandha and the date given by the author of that work in the colophon, do not lead us to any conclusive result[3]. According to Srinivasan, the only thing that can be said about the date of Vācaspati is that he must have lived sometime after Jayantabhaṭṭa. This statement is based on the thesis of P. Hacker (*op. cit.*, pp. 166 ff.) that Vācaspati reflects a later stage in the development of Advaita-Vedānta, every trace

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1 Abbreviations and editions :

ISi — Iṣṭasiddhi. Ed. M. Hiriyanna. Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. LXV, Baroda 1933.

NVTT — Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā. Ed. Rajeshwar Sastri Dravid. Kashi-Sanskrit-Series No. 24, Benares 1925-6.

Pañcapādikā. Ed. Śrīrāma Śāstrī and Krishnamurthi Śāstrī. Madras Government Oriental Series No. CLV, Madras 1958.

BSi — Brahmasiddhi. Ed. S. Kuppuswami Śāstrī. Madras 1937.

Bhāmatī. Ed. in : The Brahmasūtra-Shānkarabhāshyam with the commentaries Bhāshya-Ratnaprabhā, Bhāmatī and Nyāyanirṇaya — Ed. by Mahādeva Śāstrī Bākre. Bombay, 1934.

VV — Vibhramaviveka. Ed. in : L. Schmithausen, Maṇḍanamiśra's Vibhramavivekaḥ. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, 247. Band, 1. Abhandlung. Wien 1965.

2 Beiträge zur indischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, Walther Schubring zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht. Hamburg 1951 (pp. 160—169).

3 A critical examination of Srinivasan's penetrative discussion of this point goes beyond the aim of this article.

of which is absent in Jayantabhaṭṭa who presupposes only Maṇḍanamiśra. Hacker establishes his thesis on the basis of Jayanta's and Vācaspati's respective attitude towards the concepts of *anirvacanīya* and *vivarta*. It seems to me, however, that this thesis for the time being has to be suspended because the texts adduced so far (esp. from the Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā) are not decisive.

1. The treatment of the Advaitic theory of error in the Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā (=NVTṬ)[4] is, according to Hacker's opinion (*op. cit.*, p. 167) directed against Vimuktātman. In fact, however, Vācaspati's exposition of the Advaitic theory—though rather short—contains significant hints which point to its dependence on Maṇḍanamiśra, especially on his work Vibhramaviveka.

In the beginning of his discussion of the nature of error (NVTṬ, pp. 85, 14 ff.), Vācaspati enumerates the different theories in the same sequence as that followed in the introductory verse of the Vibhramaviveka, although in most cases he uses different terms[5]. But there are several other expressions parallel to the Vibhramaviveka : *parīkṣakāṇāṃ vipratipatteḥ* (NVTṬ, 85, 14) ≡ *parīkṣakāṇāṃ...vivādāt* (VV, 1); *anyathākhyātir iti vṛddhāḥ* (NVTṬ, 85, 16 f.)≡*vṛddhānāṃ saṃmatā khyātir anyathā* (VV 47). The only important difference between the enumeration of the NVTṬ and that of the introductory verse of the Vibhramaviveka is that in the latter text only four theories are mentioned, whereas in the NVTṬ there are five, the (Advaitic) theory of error as *anirvacanīya-jñāna* being added after the (Buddhist) theory of *asadviṣayaṃ jñānam(=asatkhyāti)*. However, this addition is easily explained by the fact that in the Vibhramaviveka itself the exposition of the Buddhist *asatkhyāti* is followed by an exposition of the Advaitic theory of error (VV, 28—36). In fact, even in the subsequent detailed exposition (and refutation) of the above mentioned theories in the NVTṬ, the Advaitic theory, unlike the other theories, does not have its own *pūrvapakṣa*. It is only mentioned by a short hint at the end of the exposition of the Buddhist *asatkhyāti* (NVTṬ, 86, 10 ff).

The final passage of that exposition runs as follows (NVTṬ, 86, 16—18) : "Just therefore, the nescience-nature of wrong cognitions consists in the (fact that they have the) capability of manifesting (something) non-existent. Some people have maintained that (the nescience-nature of

4 NVTṬ, pp. 85, 15 f.; 86, 17 f.; 87, 9 ff.

5 p. 85, l. 14 read *svākāranabāhyatva*, instead of *svākāraṃ bāhya=tva*.

wrong cognitions consists in their) indefinability" (*ata evāsatprakāśanasāmarthyam eva mithyājñānānām avidyātvam (/) anirvacanīyatvaṃ ke cid āsthiṣata*). The first of these two sentences still refers to the *asatkhyāti*[6]. So, the exposition of the Advaitic theory consists of one word only (*anirvacanīyatvam*), but in order to make it a complete sentence, *mithyājñānānām avidyātvam* has to be supplied from the previous clause. This fact is confirmed by a fragment of Vācaspati's lost commentary upon the Brahmasiddhi handed down in Ānandabodha's Pramāṇamālā[7]: "The nescience-nature of nesciences consists in their being indefinable by modes (of existence) as for instance 'existent', 'non-existent', 'both (existent and non-existent)' or 'neither (existent) nor (non-existent)' "(*ata evoktam ācārya-Vāvaspatinā brahmatattvasamīkṣāyāṃ-sadasadubhayānubhayādiprakārair anirvacanīyatvam eva hy avidyānām avidyātvam*). The definition given in this fragment, even more than that of the NVTṬ, is reminiscent of Vibhramaviveka 28 [*ato 'nirvacanīyatvaṃ*(sc. *vibhramasya*, *cf.* verse 27) *varaṃ brahmavido viduḥ/avidyāyā avidyātvam anyathā parihīyate*]. In fact, the above definitions of Vācaspati show two special characteristics of the Advaitic theory of error as found in Maṇḍana :

(a) Evidently, they imply the *identity* of error (*mithyājñāna*) and nescience (*avidyā*). This corresponds to the usage of Maṇḍana : for example, *avidyā vibhramaḥ* (BSi, 60, 7); VV, 28 (*avidyā*) besides VV, 35 (*vibhrānti*) and 36 (*vibhrama*, pl.). In Vimuktātman and in the later Advaitins, on the contrary, nescience is the *cause* of error (ISi, p. 48).

(b) What is designated as indefinable in the passages is erroneous *cognition* (*mithyājñāna*=*avidyā*, *cf.* *a*). The same is the case in Maṇḍana : *sadasadbhyām anirvācyāṃ tām avidyām pracakṣate* (VV, 29); *nānirvācyatayā matiḥ* (sc. *gamyate*) (VV, 155 d); BSi, 9, 11 ff. : *nāvidyā* [= *mithyāvabhāsaḥ* (9, 12)=*bhrāntiḥ* (9, 23)]... *atyantam asatī nāpi satī*...; *tasmād anirvacanīyā*. In the Vimuktātman, on the other hand, the indefinability of the *object* of error stands out conspicuously, although erroneous cognition, and nescience as well, are indefinable too (ISi, pp. 150 f.; both object and cognition : ISi, pp. 47 ff.).

Now, even the NVTṬ in its polemic once (p. 87, 9) refers to the view that the *object* of error is indefinable. In this case, one still has to pay attention to the peculiar way in which the object is called 'indefinable' : the substance lying before the spectator (i. e. the *substratum* of

6 *cf.* Bhāmatī, p. 12, 28 : *tasmād asatprakāśanaśaktir evāsyāvidyā*...; *cf.* also Nyāyamakaranda of Ānandabodha (Benares 1907), pp. 103, 1 f.

7 Ed. of the Advaitasabhā Granthamālā (Kumbakonam), pp. 63, 5 f.

error, for example mother-of-pearl) is said to be indefinable (as existing or not existing) in the form of contents of error (for instance silver) (... *rajatātmanā purovarttino dravyasyānirvacanīyatā*). In Vimuktātman, on the other hand, it is the *contents* of error (for instance silver) that is the indefinable object. Therefore, in this case also, Vācaspati does not seem to refer to Vimuktātman.

Different is the case of the Bhāmatī. Here we find the doctrine that the *contents* which is superimposed upon the substratum of error is called 'indefinable' (e. g. Bhāmatī, pp. 13, 24 : *anirvācyam evāropaṇīyaṃ marīciṣu toyam āstheyam*). But here also, there seems to be no outstanding feature that makes it necessary to assume an influence of Vimuktātman, though its possibility cannot be denied. Moreover, already in the Brahmasiddhi there is a tendency to conceive the contents of error as an indefinable object of error (*cf.* VV, Studie § 127). In the Bhāmatī, it may have been reinforced by the influence of Śaṅkara's emphasis on the ontological priority of the object and also by the influence of Padmapāda who defines the object (=contents) of error as *māyāmayam* (Pañcapādikā, pp. 54, 5).

Another point on which Vācaspati differs from Maṇḍana is that in the concluding sentence of his polemic against the Advaitic theory of error in the Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā (pp. 87, 19) he uses the term *anirvacanīyakhyāti*. Yet even this fact does not seem sufficient to prove an influence from Vimuktātman. For the term *anirvacanīyakhyāti* is nothing more than a synonym of *anirvacanīyajñāna* (NVTṬ, 85, 16) [which itself may be connected directly with Maṇḍana's *anirvācyatayā matiḥ* (VV 155 d)]. The only difference is that the form *anirvacanīyakhyāti* is shaped on the model of Maṇḍana's peculiar terminology of error (*ātmakhyāti* etc.).

2. (a) In his use of the concept of *vivarta*, Hacker (*op. cit.*, p. 168) and Cammann (*op. cit.*, p. 7) say, Vācaspati must have been influenced by Advaitins later than Maṇḍana and, in this case, even later than Vimuktātman. They think of Sarvajñātman[8] [who, as Cammann *op. cit.*, pp. 7 f., shows, must have been later than Prakāśātman, whereas Prakāśātman himself must have been later than Vimuktātman (*op. cit.*, pp. 4 f.)]. The reason they adduce in order to demonstrate that Vācaspati's use of the term cannot be based on Maṇḍana is the fact that Vācaspati clearly distinguishes *vivarta* from *pariṇāma*, whereas in Maṇḍ-

8 In his 'Vivarta' (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Abhandl der geistes—u. sozialwiss Klasse, Jahrgang 1953, Nr. 5), p. 231, Hacker has changed his opinion on this point.

and the two terms are said to be synonymous.[9] It seems to me, however, that this is not the case; for the particle 'or' (*vā*) in the two texts of Maṇḍana's Brahmasiddhi in which the terms *vivarta* and (*vi*) *pariṇāma* occur side by side (BSi, 7, 23 ff. and 18, 1 ff.) does not mean, as far as I can see, synonymity, but implies a real alternative. In both the texts the solution of the respective problem (i. e., the problem of the union of subject and object in the first text, and the problem of the uniformity of the world in the second text) is possible on the basis of the hypothesis of a real transformation (*vipariṇāma*) as well as on the basis of the hypothesis of an illusory change ((*vivarta*). Therefore, Maṇḍana has to mention both the possibilities. The fact that he knows the difference between these two positions becomes clear in the second of those two texts where he resumes the discussion with the words that all objects are a *vikāra* (= (*vi*) *pariṇāma*) or a *vivarta* of speech (*vāc*), like pot etc. are (a *pariṇāma* !) of clay, (or) like the reflections of the moon in water are (a *vivarta* !) of the real moon (BSi, 19, 12 f.)[10]. Furthermore, in the following lines (BSi, 19, 13 ff.[11]) Maṇḍana dismisses expressly the *pariṇāma*-hypothesis by referring to additional reasons—a fact which would be quite implausible if *vivarta* were to him a synonym of *pariṇāma*. Also regarding the problem of the union of subject and object (which is discussed in the first text), there exists another passage (BSi, 19, 23 ff.[12]) which—although not using the *terms pariṇāma* and *vivarta*—implies that the hypothesis of *pariṇāma* has to be ruled out and that of *vivarta* accepted. Besides, it may be mentioned that in the Vibhrama-viveka the term *vivarta* occurs in the context of the theory of *error: vibhrameṣu vivartatvam ato brahmavidāṃ matam* (VV 36).

(b) So the distinction made by Vācaspati between *vivarta* and *pariṇāma* does not in any way point to a progress over Maṇḍana. Besides, in the pertinent text of the Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā (pp. 593, 6 ff). We find striking parallels to the Brahmasiddhi : The argumentation of NVTṬ,

9 *cf.* P. Hacker, 'Vivarta' (see previous note), pp. 218 ff.

10 For this point, compare also D. Seyfort Ruegg in : *JAOS*, 78, p. 140.

11 BSi, 19, 20 read : "...*brahmaṇy avakalpate kalpitāvacchede; kalpitāvacchedam apy*...".

12 BSi, 19, 24 f. is to be read according to footnote (13) : *prakāśasvabhāvasyātmāno viṣayā yuktam yat prakāśeran*, i. e. : "(if) the objects (are) 'selves' of the (Brahman=Ātman) whose nature is manifestness (i. e. if they belong to its essence), (then) it is plausible that they too are manifest (=present in consciousness". Already Kumārila presupposes that one thing may have several 'selves' or natures [Ślokavārttika IV (=pratyakṣa), 118 b].

594, 1-3 (*tatra sarvātmanā pariṇāme tattvavighātād* (vgl. BSi, 19, 16) *anityatvam/ekadeśena pariṇāme sāvayavatvāt tad e ānityatvam*) closely follows BSi, 19, 18 f. (*sarvātmanā pariṇatāv anityatvam; ekadeśapariṇatau sāvayavatvān nityatvam ekatvaṃ ca vyāhanyete*). Even the expression *nāmarūpaprapañca* (NVTṬ, pp. 593, 12) occurs in the Brahmasiddhi (pp.149, 16). Also the illustration of the multiplication of one and the same face in a gem, on the surface of the blade of a sword etc., which is utilized NVTṬ, 593, 12 f. in order to explain the illusory evolution of the one Brāhmaṇa into the 'many', is to be found in the Brahmasiddhi (pp. 7, 9 and pp. 11, 11 f.). So it is not at all necessary, as Cammann (*op. cit.*, p. 126, note 1) does, to bring in Sarvajñātman as the source of inspiration of this last passage of the NVTṬ.

Therefore, in the Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā, neither Vācaspati's usage of the term *anirvacanīya* nor of the term *Vivarta* allows us to maintain that he has been influenced by later Advaitins. Also in the Bhāmatī, no conclusive instance of influence has so far been pointed out. However, in this case further investigation is needed, especially concerning the relation of this text to Vimuktātman. But even if further researches were to prove that in Vācaspati influences of later Advaitins (esp. of Vimuktātman) could be traced, still that alone would not prove that Vācaspati is later than Jayantabhaṭṭa, at least as long as the dates of these Advaitins remain so uncertain as they are. For one has to bear in mind that Jayanta ignores even those thinkers of the Śaṅkara-line of Advaita whose priority to him cannot be doubted : Śaṅkara himself and his pupils Sureśvara and Padmapāda. In general, the Śaṅkara-line of Advaita seems to have been ignored to a great extent by the traditional schools for a long time, even after Vimuktātman[13]. That Vācaspati—by the very fact of his having written the Bhāmatī—is an exception to this rule, can be explained easily by the fact that his relation to Advaita is, from the outset, closer than usual, his first work being a commentary on Maṇḍana's Brahmasiddhi.

On the other hand, there cannot be any doubt that in the very field

13 A similar phenomenon is the seemingly complete ignoring of the Prābhākara-Mīmāṃsā by the later representatives of the logico-epistemological school of Buddhism (Jñānaśrīmitra, Ratnakīrti), although Śālikanātha must have been known to them, at least through Vācaspati; for Śālikanātha is controverted by Vācaspati and probably lived in the same milieu as the latter (*cf.* the article mentioned in the following note). In the older Prajñākaragupta, on the other hand, we find a passing mention of the Prābhākara theory of error [Pramāṇavārtikabhāṣyam (Patna 1953) pp. 196, 20].

of Nyāya Jayanta reflects an earlier stage of development than Vācaspati (whose ideas often evidently depend on those of his teacher Trilocana). Consider, for instance, the fact that Jayanta (although he was very interested in this subject, as is proved by his lengthy discussion of it) still does not even mention either the completely new analysis of perception (*pratyakṣa*) set forth by Trilocana and repeated by Vācaspati,[14] nor his reinterpretation of the word *avyapadeśyam* (Nyāyasūtra I, 1, 4) which is connected with that new analysis. This fact seems to exclude the possibility of Jayanta's having known either Trilocana[15] or Vācaspati. It does not, however, necessarily imply that Jayanta was earlier than Trilocana or even Vācaspati. For Jayanta's tendency (though not exclusive) to utilize with preference sources centuries older, has—against the opinion of Srinivasan (*op. cit.*, pp. 57, 6 f.)—been observed not only in the field of logic but also in the field of the theory of perception[16]. Yet the possibility that Vācaspati and even Trilocana might have lived later than Jayanta cannot be set aside. At least, it is hardly conceivable that they have lived ***considerably*** earlier than Jayanta. Especially as regards the Bhāmatī (Vācaspati's last work), its priority to Jayanta's Nyāyamañjarī is not very probable.

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14 *cf.* L. Schmithausen, 'Vorstellungsfreie und vorstellende Wahrnehmung bei Śālikanātha, (Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd-und Ostasiens, Band VII/1963), pp. 113—115.

15 As regards the evaluation of the fact that Jayanta mentions the doctrine of *mānasapratyakṣa* as a means for the apprehension of a necessary connection (say between smoke and fire), I follow Srinivasan (*op. cit*, § 1. 5. 13). One should pay attention to the imp·rtant role the *mānasapratyakṣa* plays already in the system of the "Vyākhyātṛ" and his school so familiar to Jayanta (*cf.* B. N. Gupta, 'Die Wahrnehmungslehre in der Nyāyamañjarī', Diss Bonn 1962, pp. 54 ff. and 117 ff.).

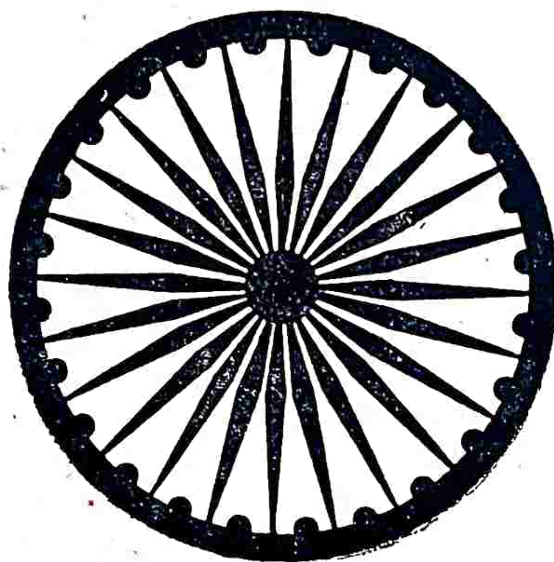
16 *cf.* Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 f. Perhaps also circumstances like geographical distance have to be taken into account as possible reasons for the fact that even a little earlier authors may remain unmentioned.

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